

Most of the initiatives that we are going to undertake relate to activities which are designed to mobilize the African-American community. I held this press conference. I called in these leaders of labor and the private sector at the beginning of the Congressional Black Caucus legislative weekend, because I wanted to send the message not only to the people out there in the communities, the parents and the community leaders, but I wanted to send a message to my fellow caucus members. We are not doing enough.

In the spirit of James Farmer, we should seize the initiative and come to grips with the problem of school improvement, education improvement. At the heart of that is a physical facility. If one has a religion, and the temple, the church, the physical facility is allowed to crumble and decay and obviously be neglected, then it sends a message to all that the people who are advocates of that religion, the heritage of that religion are not serious.

Ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia became a bloody, burning, nasty set of atrocious activities that made the whole world want to vomit. Thousands have been confirmed as murdered and the estimates continue to climb. The Serbs attempted to drive out the Albanians in obvious and crude ways. African-America cleansing in America is moving forward to a far less alarming but more subtle and certain manner. It is moving forward in a far less alarming, but more subtle and certain manner.

Listen. African-American cleansing. One can destroy the education for the children of a group, and one can destroy the group without firing a single shot. In a complex world today, people can be destroyed by the act of refusing to provide a relevant education for their children.

The present movement toward the abandonment of the public school system greatly endangers the survival of the African-American community. We are going to be reauthorizing Title I of the Elementary Secondary Education Assistance act this week. This Wednesday it is scheduled for the calendar. It is one more series of attempts to abandon the public school system that has to be fought.

Education is critical for survival. The oppressed South African blacks clearly understood this truth when they rebelled against Bantu Education. The famed uprising at Soweto was led by school children who understood that they were being systematically crippled in their classrooms. In America, there is no official conspiracy to intellectually deform African-American children. But benign neglect, bureaucratic bungling and the savage inequalities like the one described by Jonathan Kozol, accidentally accomplish the same devastating results.

The current emphasis on privatization and vouchers, coupled with education budget cuts and the refusal of both Republicans and Democrats to

support meaningful school modernization and construction appropriations by the Federal Government will produce a massive Soweto-like impact in the large cities where the majority of African-American youth live.

In too many local education agencies, the schooling process is already merely a ceremony. Routinely assumptions are made that black students cannot emerge from the standard 12-year education regiment with a level of accomplishment which enables them to cope with present-day occupational and personal management challenges.

School systems go through enough motions to justify the economic activity which finances teachers salaries, custodial personnel, supplies, equipment, and administrative bureaucracy. But in too many instances, they are content not to focus on the end product and what they are achieving there.

The current acceleration of this minimal, of fraudulent education process as a result of less resources and highly visible decaying infrastructure has produced an unrecognized crisis for African-Americans. In full view, the commitment to meaningful public education is steadily being withdrawn by elected officials.

New York City had a \$2 billion surplus, and not a penny was spent on trying to refurbish, renovate, or build any new schools. New York State had a \$2 billion surplus, and they refused, and the Governor vetoed a \$500 million proposal for school repair.

So at the local level, we have a steady withdrawal of support for public schools. The clearest reflection of this danger is this brick and mortar disaster. Crumbling school buildings send a loud message stating that pedagogical and administrative infrastructure is also collapsing. If the buildings are collapsing, then do not expect much to be happening inside them. There is no commitment in there either.

A total abandonment of public education in America is a possibility. While private alternatives are shuffled around, a generation of students could be lost. More than African-American children of course would be placed at risk by this public policy blunder. The education of all children of working families who cannot afford private schools is at stake.

But I appeal, especially to the African-American leadership to get moving. In the spirit of James Farmer, come to grips with the problem, focus on it as being the number one survival problem in our municipalities.

In the spirit of James Farmer, the leadership has to shun or understand that there are no headlines out there for people who work in the vineyard trying to improve schools and trying to get funds for school construction. They have to understand that right out from under them, while they think that they are leaders, right out from under them, the people who matter most, our constituents, are discouraged. They feel vulnerable. They feel abandoned.

I want to end with a few quotes from Jim Farmer, and I do this in the spirit of urging that the leadership of the African-American community, starting with my colleagues in Congress, remember Jim Farmer as a man of action and a man who provided the opportunity to act for the people who were suffering.

Jim Farmer, after the attacks on the Freedom Riders said, "When dogs bite in Birmingham, we bleed everywhere." Evil societies always kill their consciences. The NAACP is the justice department, the Urban League is the state department, and Corps members are the nonviolent marines.

□ 2100

"The time is not for jail-going and bleeding heads, but for long-range planning and sophisticated strategizing. There will be fewer demonstrations and more celebration. Our Nation deceives itself with the fiction that the task is complete and racism is dead and all is well. The myth surrounds us that America has suddenly become color blind and that all that remains is our economic problem. No greater lie has ever been told, and the tellers of it, if they have eyes to see and minds to think, must know it."

That comes from the epilogue of the James Farmer book, which I mentioned before, *Lay Bare The Heart*. "Our Nation deceives itself with the fiction that the task is complete and racism is dead and all is well. The myth surrounds us that America suddenly has become color blind and that all that remains is our economic problem. No greater lie has ever been told, and the tellers of it, if they have eyes to see and minds to think, must know it."

African-American leaders are the people who ought to know it, and we urge them very much to open their eyes.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WAMP). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2149

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DREIER) at 9 o'clock and 49 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 68, CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000

Mr. GOSS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report